



The Forever Wild **Land Trust:**

An interim report to the citizens of Alabama — **1992 through 2009**

ALABAMA FOREVER WILD LAND TRUST BOARD OF TRUSTEES

M. BARNETT LAWLEY

Commissioner, Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources,
ex officio Chairman

LINDA S. CASEY

State Forester, Alabama Forestry Commission,
ex officio member

DR. GEORGE CROZIER

Executive Director of the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium,
ex officio member

DR. A.F. SCHLUNDT

Faulkner University, Montgomery,
Appointed by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education
(representing the Southern District)

DR. ROBERT O. LAWTON

University of Alabama in Huntsville,
Appointed by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education
(representing the Northern District)

DR. LAWRENCE J. DAVENPORT

Professor, Samford University, Appointed by the Alabama
Commission on Higher Education
(representing the Central District)

GEORGE BARBER

Businessman, Birmingham, Alabama. Appointed by Governor Riley
(representing the Central District)

ANGUS R. COOPER, III

Mobile, Alabama. Appointed by Governor Riley
(representing the Southern District)

DR. JEFF MCCOLLUM

Physician, Decatur, Alabama. Appointed by Governor Riley
(representing the Northern District)

EVERETT JOHNSON

Andalusia, Alabama. Appointed by Lt. Governor Baxley
(representing the Southern District)

RAYMOND A. KELLER

Hollywood, Alabama. Appointed by Lt. Governor Folsom
(representing the Northern District)

LEE ROBERTSON KUWICA

Consultant, Birmingham, Alabama. Appointed by Lt.
Governor Baxley (representing the Central District).

JOHN WOLLER, SR.

Businessman, Decatur, Alabama. Appointed by Speaker Hammett
(representing the Northern District).

DR. RICHARD D. HOLLAND

President, Livingston, Alabama. Appointed by Speaker
Hammett (representing the Central District).

JAMES A. YANCE

Mobile, Alabama. Appointed by Speaker Hammett
(representing the Southern District)

Cover Photo by: Hunter Nichols

Photography by: Beth Maynor Young, Billy Pope, Hunter Nichols, Dan Brothers and Kim Nix





© Beth Maynor Young, 2010

CONTENTS

Commissioner's Message	5
Public Lands in Alabama.....	6
Alabama Forever Wild Map.....	7
Alabama's Forever Wild Program: An Era of Land Protection.....	8
Accomplishments: 1992-2009.....	11
Significant Nature Preserves and Recreation Areas Secured by Forever Wild.....	12
Traditional Recreation Opportunities.....	16
Public Hunting	18
Wildlife Management Areas Benefitting from Forever Wild Projects	19
Partnerships	20
Government.....	23
Non-Government Organizations.....	24
Additional Benefits.....	26
Forever Wild: A Matter of National Security.....	33
Conclusion.....	34
Frequently Asked Questions	37
Some other interesting facts about the benefits of Alabama's Forever Wild Program	38
Conservation Acres Acquired by State and Federal Programs in the Southeast 1998-2005.....	39
Conservation Land Acquisition Cost in Southeastern States 1998-2005	39

STATE  ALABAMA

FOREVER WILD PROPERTY

Your Natural Resource Protection and
Recreation Land Acquisition Program

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
ALABAMA STATE LANDS DIVISION, 1-800-LAND ALA

Message from Conservation Commissioner M. Barnett Lawley



Within Alabama, public land is an important component of our approach to conserving natural resources, while also supporting our opportunities for outdoor recreation. Alabama's official government program, the Forever Wild Land Trust, has made great strides in protecting our state's unique natural heritage, while also providing a land base that supports recreational programs. These accomplishments improve the quality of life for Alabama's current and future citizens.

In its 17 years of existence, the Forever Wild Program has been managed by a diverse Board of Trustees representing the broad interests of Alabama's citizens. Through the assistance of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), the program has received outstanding fiscal stewardship, and has served as a model for effective government administration.

Since its initial funding in 1992, Forever Wild has acquired 205,408 acres in 22 counties, which are equitably distributed across Alabama. These acquisitions have been funded through the stipulations of Constitutional Amendment 543 – the interest earnings from investments within the Alabama Trust Fund, which are derived from gas royalties from Alabama's submerged lands in coastal waters. This process is often referred to as “conservation currency,” whereby one form of natural resource (Alabama's natural gas) is being converted and invested into another (land). The present tally of land acquired by Forever Wild and ADCNR has been achieved through an investment of \$146 million, of which \$41 million have come from federal grant programs. *All of this was accomplished without an increase in taxes.*

Forever Wild's projects have become a refreshing measure of successful government throughout Alabama. When we think about the protection of our greatest outdoor landmarks, most of them have been supported through Forever Wild's involvement. The Mobile-Tensaw Delta, Walls of Jericho, Sipsey River Swamp, Freedom Hills, Lillian Swamp, the Red Hills, Weogufka Creek, Ruffner Mountain, Turkey Creek, Hurricane Creek, Grand Bay Savannah, Little River Canyon, Old Cahawba Prairie, Hatchet Creek, Coon Gulf, Paint Rock River, Coldwater Mountain, Perdido River, Weeks Bay . . . the list of accomplishments mirrors the hopes of Forever Wild's early supporters. In recognition of these accomplishments, many of these places have been profiled by renowned artists and outdoor educators, including Dr. Doug Phillips and the Alabama Public Television icon *Discovering Alabama*.

While the conservation of Forever Wild's land is forever, the funding for acquiring more land will cease in 2012, as stipulated by Constitutional Amendment 543. Despite the many successes over the last 17 years, the legislature of Alabama must decide if these accomplishments are enough, or if they warrant being continued.

We hope this report and summary of Forever Wild's achievements helps you better understand the program and its achievements. In the end, the appreciation of and satisfaction with Forever Wild's efforts will govern each citizen's interests and actions.

Public Lands in Alabama

Within Alabama, outdoor recreational activities take place on both public and private land. If you enjoy boating or water skiing, you need space and water to accomplish those activities. In a similar fashion, many citizens of Alabama who enjoy clean water and outdoor pursuits like backpacking, birding, camping, canoeing, fishing, hiking, hunting, horseback riding, or mountain bike riding, benefit from the expansive areas of public land that support these endeavors. When we take to the field to enjoy these activities, often referred to as quality-of-life opportunities, many of us go to a national forest, state park, or wildlife management area. These are special places, but they represent a very small portion of our state's land.

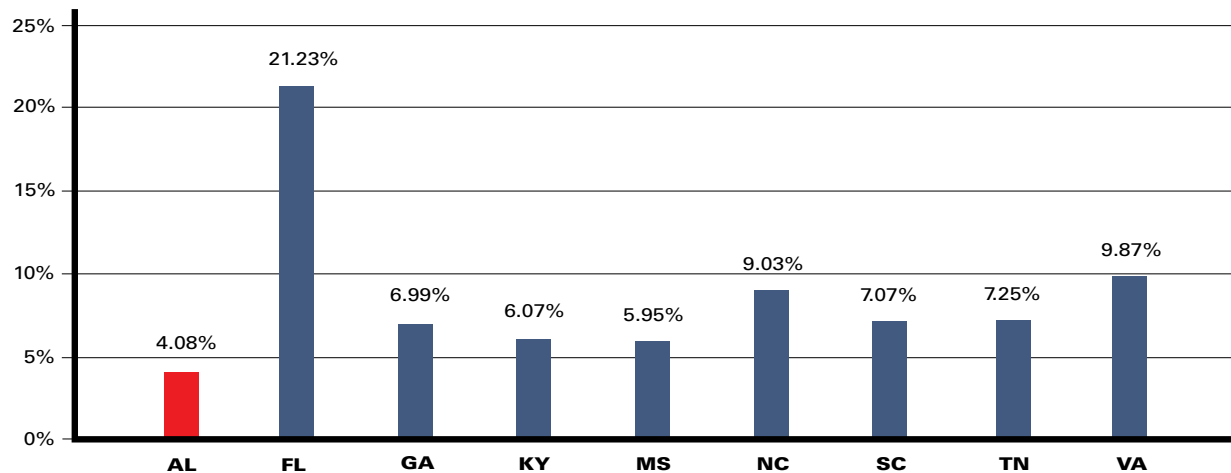
The State of Alabama is 50,744 square miles in size, which equals about 33,550,720 acres. Within that space, public land with restricted

development (state parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, state owned wildlife management areas, Forever Wild land, and military bases; both federal and state ownership), amounts to 1,451,621 acres (See map and chart on page 7). This value equates to 4.47 percent of the land area (rivers and reservoirs removed from calculations). Despite Forever Wild's accomplishments over the last 17 years, we have a smaller percentage of public land in Alabama than any other southeastern state (See graph below).


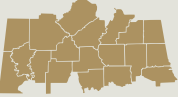
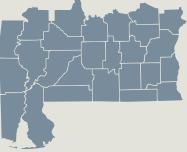
When we consider our citizens' interest in outdoor recreation, and add to that an interest in habitat protection and good water quality, we begin to recognize the importance of continuing this public land program, and the conservation of Alabama's natural resources.

Percentage of Protected Lands in the Southeast

Percentage of each state's land area that is permanently protected from degradation. Protected lands are managed for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, habitat restoration, recreation and protection of sensitive species. Data was obtained from the Protected Areas Database of the United States (PAD-US) online at <http://gapanalysis.nbii.gov> Through 2007



Alabama Forever Wild Map

Alabama Forever Wild Districts	Percent of Total Population within Each District*	Percent of State and Federally Protected Land within Each District
 North District	1,703,327 People (34%)	648,945 acres (7%)
 Central District	1,638,739 People (33%)	307,556 acres (3%)
 South District	1,664,774 People (33%)	362,003 acres (3%)

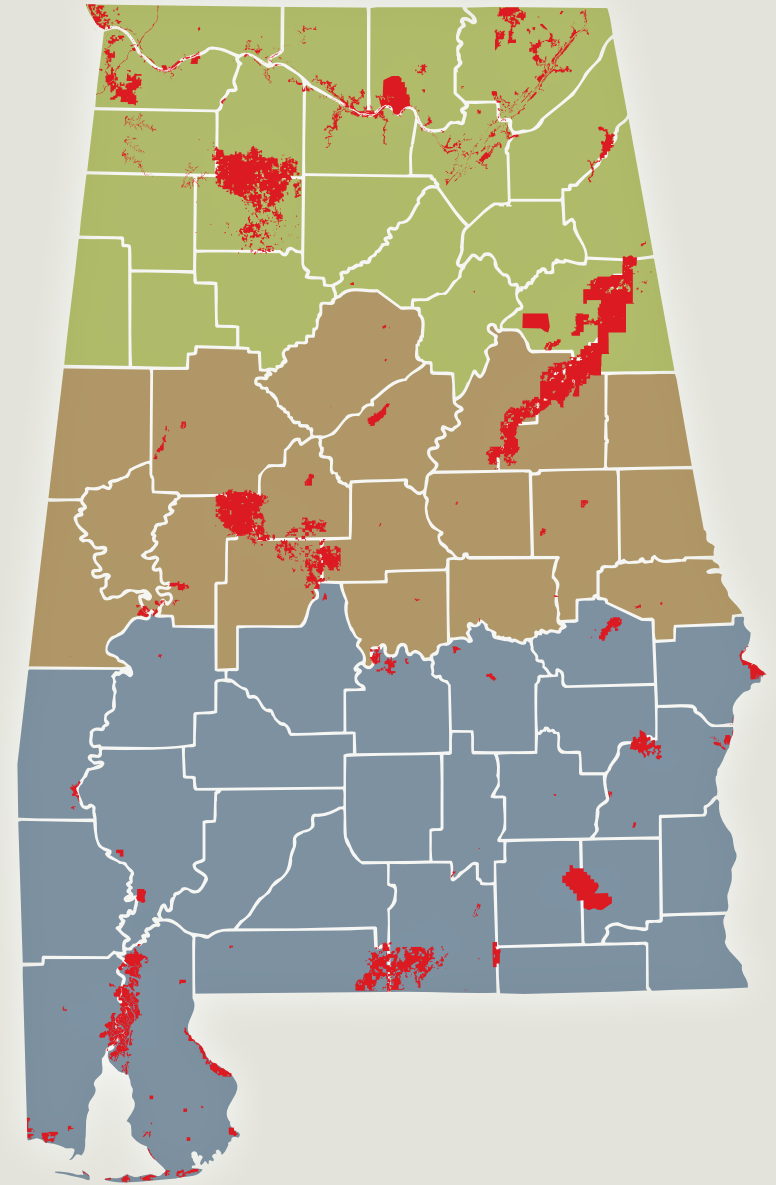


State or Federally Protected Land

— In addition to Forever Wild land, includes military bases, state parks and national forests.

* U.S. Census Bureau. 2005. TIGER/Line Files, 2005 First Edition.

Data was obtained from the Protected Areas Database of the United States (PAD-US) online at <http://gapanalysis.nbii.gov> through 2007.



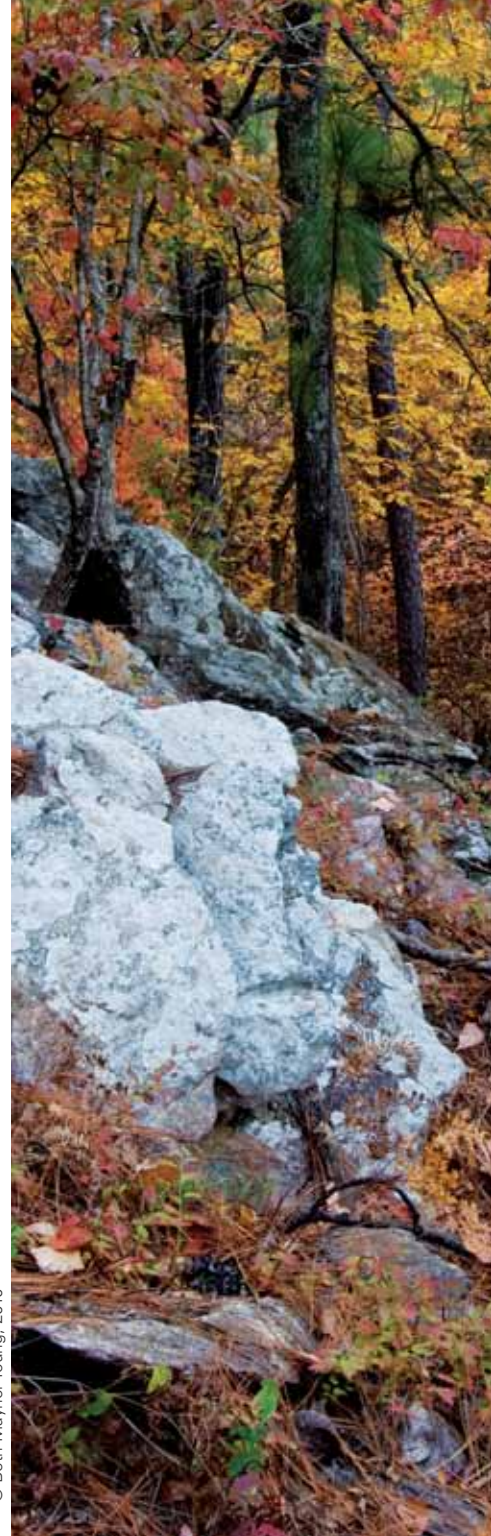
Alabama's Forever Wild Program: An Era of Land Protection

Considering the many conservation success stories in Alabama, our citizens have much to be proud of. Our state is steeped in a rich heritage that is inseparable from our natural resources. In the early 1900s Alabama was entering a new era as a state. Our forests and game were depleted, and landowners were left in desperate conditions during and after the Great Depression. The next few decades witnessed a steady and deliberate stewardship of Alabama's natural resources. It was a period of conservation. As hallmarks of our hunting traditions, deer and turkey were diligently protected and gradually relocated to new areas of the state where they could re-populate and later flourish. Public hunting areas were established through a statewide system of Wildlife Management Areas. Alabama's State Park system was initially created in the 1930s, in conjunction with the Civilian Conservation Corps, and over a 50-year period, 22 parks were developed. Many of Alabama's rivers were impounded to control flooding and generate electricity. While those efforts altered and impaired riverine habitat, they also created new reservoirs. Fisheries were established and our state became a new destination for recreational fishing.

These tremendous accomplishments continued to grow through the 1970s, much like Alabama. As we entered the 1980s, things in Alabama became different. Our metropolitan areas began to grow at a greater rate, and the face of Alabama, which had long reflected our rural heritage, slowly began to change. Once Interstate 65 was completed in 1982, linking our state from south to north, the pace of life quickened.

Alabama's citizens came together in the late 1980s to introduce the notion of establishing a new program that could serve to purchase public land for conservation. The interests were many, and within a few years, a broad coalition of supporters had mustered an effort to lead a bill through Alabama's legislative process. Its intent was strong: amend Alabama's Constitution to provide funding and structure for a dedicated land acquisition program. After some debate over previous versions submitted in 1988, 1989, and 1990, the leadership of Alabama's Legislature and then Commissioner of Conservation James Martin prevailed, and a similar bill passed through the legislature in the spring of 1991. The House vote was 94 to 3, and the Senate vote on the identical bill was 29 to 1. This history demonstrates broad consensus among Alabama's lawmakers, mirroring the will of the citizens. The bill was ratified by the people during the electoral cycle on November 3, 1992.

The results were both surprising and rewarding. By a margin of 84 percent, Alabama voters approved the passage of Constitutional Amendment 543, creating the Forever Wild Land Trust. At the time, this level of public approval was the highest ever recorded for any state legislation establishing a governmental land acquisition program. Thus, in a move to compliment sound forestry management on private lands and a flourishing wildlife management program for our many game species, Forever Wild was created to serve as a new tool for Alabama's conservation toolbox.





Constitutional Amendment 543 established the basic principles for a successful program. A 15-member Board of Trustees, representing established leaders of the conservation, environmental, education and business communities, serves as the governing body for the program. The amendment provided for a dedicated and steady source of funding from the Alabama Trust Fund for a period extending from 1992-2012. As it passed, our citizens established a program committed to acquiring land for the purpose of supporting established conservation programs.

As the Forever Wild program began in 1992, the Board of Trustees established its administrative procedures and the criteria for evaluating land nominated to the program. This process led to the establishment of four basic categories for acquisition and eventual management by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources:

Nature Preserves — tracts of land that are protected through acquisition, providing for the long-term stewardship of their unique habitats and the plants and animals that they support. Tracts purchased under this category are managed by the State Lands Division.

Recreation Areas — tracts of land that serve a variety of recreational pursuits, including backpacking, birding, boating, bicycling, canoeing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, nature study and photography. Tracts purchased under this category are managed by the State Lands Division.

State Parks — tracts of land purchased to buffer existing parks, or provide for new areas serving their respective intentions. Tracts purchased under this category are managed by the State Parks Division.

Wildlife Management Areas — tracts of land purchased to secure new, or support existing Wildlife Management Areas hosting public hunting. Tracts purchased under this category are managed by the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division.

During its first 17 years, Forever Wild purchased about 205,408 acres in 22 counties. The acquisitions support additions to six state parks, 13 wildlife management areas, and one long-distance hiking trail, while also creating 16 new nature preserves and recreation areas.



© Hunter Nichols, 2010



© Beth Maynor Young, 2010

Dan Brothers, Outdoor Alabama

Accomplishments: 1992-2009

Habitat Protection and New Recreational Opportunities

All lands acquired through Forever Wild are managed under the principle of multiple-use and target four primary designations: Nature Preserves, Recreation Areas, State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas. Many of the attributes and objectives contained within the four acquisition categories are complementary to one another. In fact, 70 percent of Forever Wild purchases fall under multiple management categories. These circumstances result in the cooperative management of different programs by the Conservation Departments' three land managing Divisions (Lands, Parks and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries). As an example, several State Park additions are also Nature Preserves because of the unique habitats they support. Most of Forever Wild's largest acquisitions are managed as Nature Preserves, Recreation Areas and Wildlife Management Areas.

State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas have been in existence since the 1940s. However, state-owned Nature Preserves and Recreation Areas did not exist before the Forever Wild Program. Consequently, Constitutional Amendment 543 gave Alabama two entirely new forms of public land, both of which have contributed significantly to Alabama's advances in habitat conservation and recreational opportunities.

Nature Preserves

Nature Preserve acquisitions focus on areas of land throughout Alabama representing unique natural communities, or lands that host unusual habitats containing rare plants and animals.

The plants and animals are managed through numerous activities including prescribed burning, controlling exotic species, providing artificial nesting structures for resident wildlife, and other forms of habitat restoration.

Recreation Areas

Recreation Area acquisitions focus on properties often serving many recreation purposes. Small parks (without on-site managers) for picnicking and hiking, streamside put-in and take-out areas for canoeists and kayakers, fishing and boat launching areas and parks protecting areas of historic significance are some examples.

Activities may include:

- Backpacking
- Birding
- Boating
- Canoeing and kayaking
- Field Trials
- Fishing
- Horseback Riding
- Hunting
- Hiking
- Nature Observation
- Photography
- Primitive Camping
- Outdoor Education
- Mountain Biking

Significant Nature Preserves and Recreation Areas Secured by Forever Wild



© Beth Maynor Young, 2010

Mobile-Tensaw Delta Nature Preserve and Recreation Area

in Baldwin and Mobile counties is comprised of 49,354 acres of bottomland hardwoods, cypress/tupelo swamps, bogs, marshes and a variety of other wetland habitat types interspersed amidst an abundance of rivers, creeks, sloughs, ponds and lakes. These tracts comprise all of the Upper Delta Wildlife Management Area, and a portion of the adjoining the W.L. Holland and Mobile-Tensaw Delta Wildlife Management Areas,

which collectively represent the largest grouping of publicly owned wetland habitats (state and federal, ~112,000 acres) in Alabama. These lands also represent the largest grouping of state owned land in Alabama.

Walls of Jericho, Post Oak Flat, and Henshaw Cove Nature Preserves and Recreation Areas in Jackson County

consist of 17,740 acres bordering Tennessee. These lands were purchased in partnership with The Alabama Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the Alabama Forestry Commission's Forest Legacy Program. The tracts are comprised of mountainous and wooded terrain, hosting caves, springs, rocky bluffs and portions of the headwaters and main channel of the Paint Rock River. These tracts comprise about 40 percent of the Skyline Wildlife Management Area.



© Beth Maynor Young, 2010

Perdido River Longleaf Hills Nature Preserve and Recreation Area

in Baldwin County consists of 18,094 acres of wetlands and uplands along the Perdido River. These tracts are comprised of 30 percent forested wetland habitats supporting an Atlantic white-cedar community within a unique blackwater stream corridor, which includes carnivorous plant bogs. These wetland habitats are bordered by an upland pine-sandhill forest favoring a longleaf and slash pine community. Many of these tracts were acquired in partnership with The Alabama Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the State Lands Division, with financial support from three distinct federal grant programs. These tracts also comprise all of the Perdido River Wildlife Management Area.



© Beth Maynor Young, 2010

Coosa River Longleaf Hills Nature Preserve and Recreation Area

in Coosa County consists of 9,746 acres of mountain longleaf habitat, interspersed by hardwood drains within the Weogufka and Hatchet Creek watersheds. All of the land lies within the Coosa Wildlife Management Area, one of Alabama's oldest established public hunting areas. The property also hosts one of the last remaining populations of red-cockaded woodpecker colonies outside of Alabama's National Forest system. The tract comprises about 26 percent of the Coosa River Wildlife Management Area.

Grand Bay Savanna Nature Preserve

in Mobile County consists of 5,311 acres of coastal marsh, maritime forest and piney flatwoods, which were acquired with financial support from several National Coastal Wetlands grants. These lands are adjacent to the federally owned Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge, which straddles the Alabama/Mississippi line, and comprises the largest pine savannah and carnivorous bog complex in the Southeastern United States.



Billy Pope, Outdoor Alabama

Lillian Swamp Nature Preserve and Recreation Area

in Baldwin County consist of approximately 1,858 acres of pine savannah and marsh habitats that include carnivorous plant bogs, which are all adjacent to Perdido Bay. Portions of the tract were acquired by the State Lands Division with financial support from two federal grant programs. These lands also abut state owned trust lands and the Alabama Department of Transportation's Lillian Wetland Mitigation Bank.

Sipsey River Nature Preserve and Recreation Area

in Tuscaloosa County is 3,431 acres of bottomland hardwood forest and swamp lands located along the eastern flood plain of the Sipsey River. These habitats host a diverse array of wetland dependent plants and animals, as well as a rich assemblage of freshwater mussels and fish. The Sipsey River is also unique in being the largest remaining unimpounded tributary to the Tombigbee River. These tracts have been acquired in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, and are the only public conservation lands within the Sipsey River watershed.



Shoal Creek Recreation Area

(Dedicated as the Billingsley-McClure Preserve) in Lauderdale County protects 300 acres of hardwood forest habitat adjacent to the scenic Shoal Creek. The land also includes two small tributary streams that have a unique stairstep waterfall system that can be stunning in the winter and spring seasons. Acquisition of this land was accomplished through financial support from the City of Florence and Lauderdale County.

Weeks Bay Nature Preserve

in Baldwin County consists of 274 acres, which are largely comprised of forest and marsh wetland habitats. The tracts are a component of the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, which is one of 27 similar reserves located throughout the coastal U.S., and supported in part through the National Office of Atmospheric Administration. The land was acquired with financial support from several National Coastal Wetlands grants.

Splinter Hill Bog Nature Preserve and Recreation Area

in Baldwin County consists of approximately 1,351 acres of longleaf pine and bog habitat, at the headwaters of the Perdido River. Within these habitats lies one of the largest and most biologically diverse seepage slope bog communities in the Southeastern United States. The tracts adjoin The Nature Conservancy's Splinter Hill Bog Preserve on its western border, which is a similar size and has complimentary objectives to forward the conservation of these rare natural communities. Portions of the tract were acquired by the State Lands Division through Coastal Impact Assistance Program funds.



Billy Pope, Outdoor Alabama



© Beth Maynor Young, 2010

Turkey Creek Nature Preserve and Recreation Area

in Jefferson County consist of 510 acres of pine-hardwood forest located along Turkey Creek. The suburban setting of the creek within the community of Pinson provides for unique recreational opportunities. This project is part of an ongoing partnership with the Freshwater Land Trust, the local governments of Pinson and Jefferson County, as well as a new educational facility managed by Birmingham-Southern College.

Wehle Nature Preserve and Recreation Area

in Bullock County consists of approximately 1,505 acres of pine sandhill habitat at the headwaters of the Cowikee Creek. Six hundred forty acres of the tract serve as an addition to Barbour Wildlife Management Area. Adjoining lands were acquired by the State Lands Division in support of the Wehle Land Conservation Center.



Kim Nix, Outdoor Alabama

The Certain Nature Preserve and Recreational Area

in Madison County protects 340 acres on the crest of Green Mountain within the City of Huntsville. Following models previously employed at Monte Sano State Park, the project adjoins land acquired by the Land Trust of Huntsville and North Alabama, and was financially supported by the city and county government. Management is cooperatively accomplished through partnership with the City of Huntsville and the local land trust.

The State Cattle Ranch Nature Preserve and Recreation Area

in Hale County is a black-belt prairie site that includes a mix of grassland and pine-hardwood forest habitats situated between drainages of Big German Creek. Located at the historic State Cattle Ranch, this 4,328-acre acquisition provides for habitat restoration opportunities of prairie grasslands, as well as numerous recreation opportunities that include field trial sites, and group hunting events for youth and the physically disabled. The tracts were acquired in partnership with the State Lands Division, in conjunction with a broader effort to restore grassland habitats and support a state-run recreational area dedicated to the historic sport of field trials.

Old Cahawba Prairie Nature Preserve and Recreation Area

in Dallas County is a black-belt prairie site that includes a mix of grassland and pine-hardwood forest habitats situated along the Cahaba River. Another significant feature of the 3,007-acre tract is its proximity to the historic site of Alabama's first capital, located within the Alabama Historical Commission's Old Cahawba Park.

To learn more about these Forever Wild tracts and the recreational opportunities that they offer, go to www.alabamaforeverwild.com

Traditional Recreational Opportunities

State Parks

Alabama's State Park system represents the greatest concentration of conservation users within Alabama. Located throughout Alabama in 28 counties, the State Park systems' 22 facilities host an annual visitation of 3 million people per year. Visitors to the parks enjoy numerous recreational opportunities coupled with a variety of lodging options that extend the outdoor experience.

State Park acquisitions may target land purchases that could create a new state park or provide additional acreage to an existing state park. Many additions to existing state parks offer new areas for recreational activities within the park, or simply serve as "green space" buffering for the park from neighboring residential communities or adjacent development. Parks benefitting from these acquisitions include:

Guntersville State Park

DeSoto State Park

Cathedral Caverns State Park

Monte Sano State Park

Fort Toulouse Historic State Park

Historic Blakeley State Park

Old Cahawba Archaeological Site

It has been a long time since Alabama received a new State Park. Forever Wild would likely be the only mechanism for acquiring enough land to create such an opportunity.





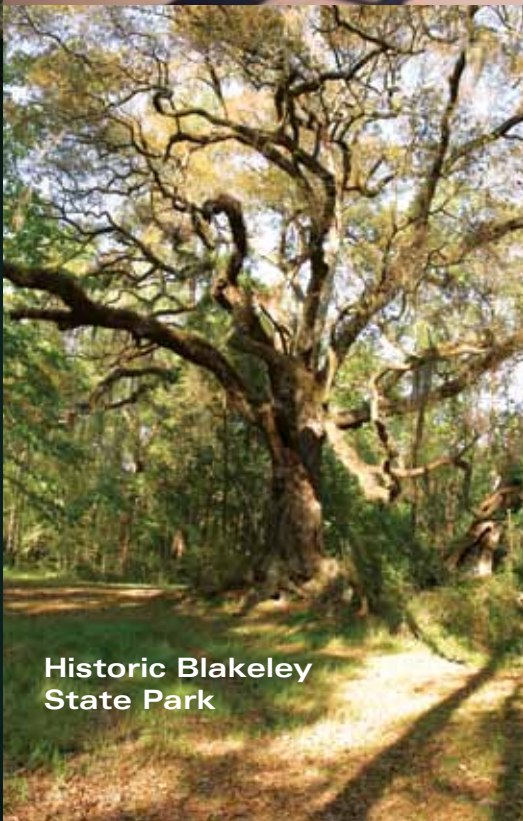
Guntersville State Park



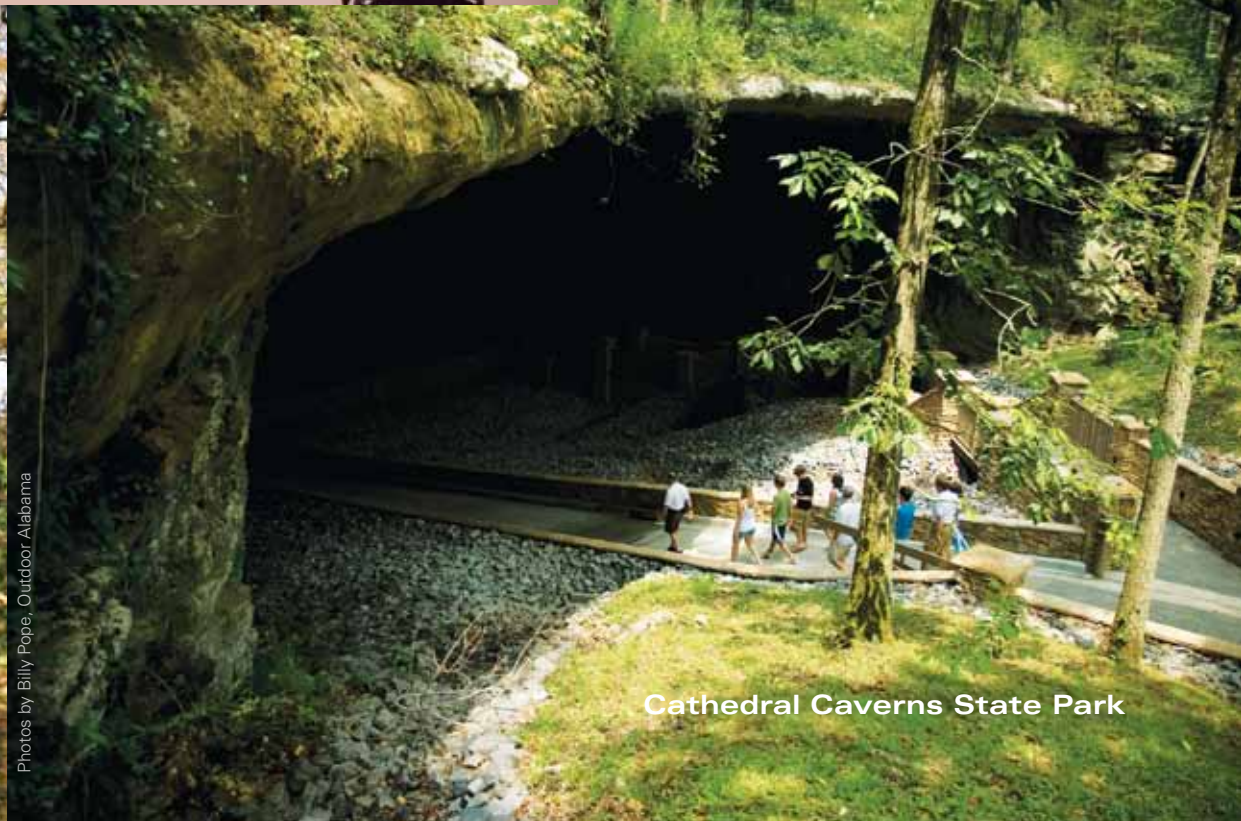
Fort Toulouse
Historic State Park



DeSoto
State Park



Historic Blakeley
State Park



Cathedral Caverns State Park

Photos by Billy Pope, Outdoor Alabama

Public Hunting

One of the most popular forms of outdoor recreation exists in the form of public hunting land. Within Alabama, public hunting opportunities come in the form of wildlife management areas. In the 1950s and 1960s, large landowners were eager to undertake lease agreements with the ADCNR to create public hunting areas. At the time, developing timber markets and the lack of abundant big game both contributed to depressed land value potential. At the time, entering into lease agreements with the ADCNR made good sense to private landowners because it placed resource professionals on-site where they could help protect the land and its recovering game species. Ironically, the success of restoring game species like deer and turkey slowly created a recreational market for hunting leases. Over time, landowners determined to pursue better economic opportunities withdrew their lands from the state's WMA system. These losses reached their peak in the 1980s, creating another compelling reason for creating a dedicated land acquisition program for Alabama.

In conjunction with the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division's 65-year history of providing for these public hunting areas, the Forever Wild Program has made great strides in protecting a large base of land that can support Alabama's hunting legacy for the next 100 years. The advances go beyond simple acres of land acquired. Unlike the approach required with short-term no-cost leases, when Forever Wild or ADCNR purchase land for the WMA system, it allows the employment of long-term management strategies. The results are improved management strategies directed at the long-term benefit of wildlife and their necessary habitats.

Despite these successes, leased public hunting areas are still being lost each year. Changing business models caused corporations to withdraw nearly 50,000 acres from the WMA system in 2007-2008. Fortunately, Forever Wild has been able to keep pace with many of these losses and maintain a stable base of public hunting land. Forever Wild is the only mechanism for protecting or replacing these large areas of land.

Wildlife Management Areas

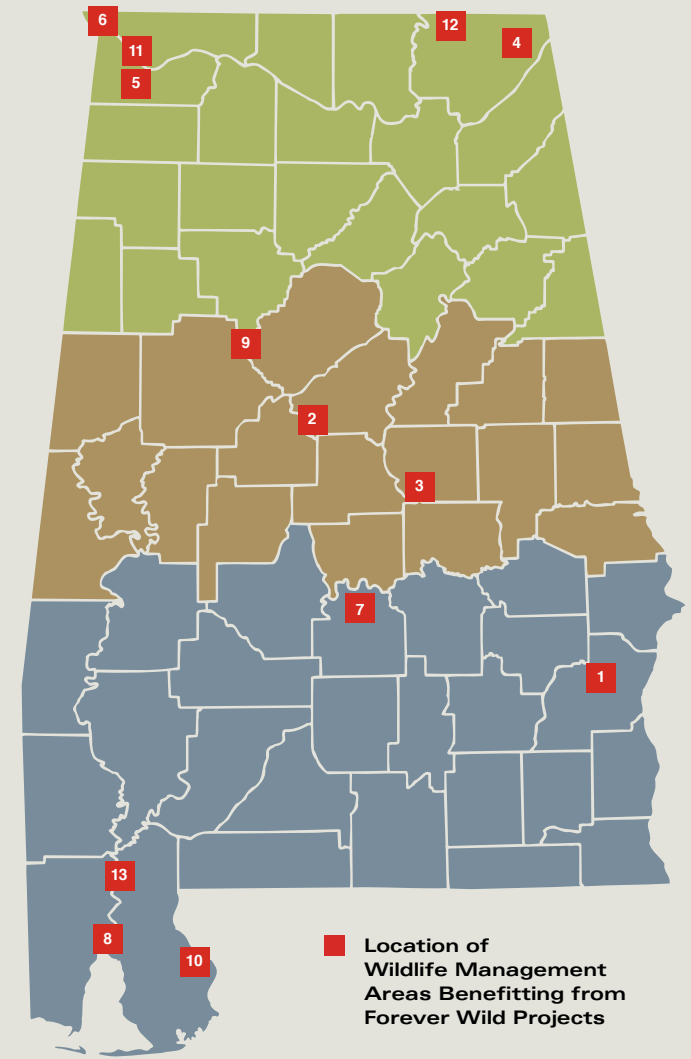
Forever Wild's Wildlife Management Area (WMA) acquisitions are designed to create new WMAs or provide additional acreage for existing WMAs (including Community Hunting Areas). Because the majority of game species in Alabama exist on private property, the acquisition of public land for WMAs is important to provide the general public access to affordable hunting. For many citizens, subsistence hunting remains an important means of putting high quality protein on a family's table. In hard times, that is no small consideration.

Since 1992, Forever Wild has secured over 183,603 acres of public hunting lands that are part of Alabama's WMA system. These lands are distributed within 13 WMAs in 12 counties. Forever Wild has been instrumental in the purchase of several tracts that have created entirely new WMAs where none previously existed (Riverton, Upper Delta and Perdido River), and the majority of land within Alabama's state-owned WMAs have been secured through the Forever Wild Program. Hunting opportunities vary depending on the characteristics of each WMA, including, waterfowl, big and small game, primitive and modern weapons use, as well as areas for hunters with physical disabilities.

Wildlife Management Areas Benefitting from Forever Wild Projects:

- 1 — **Barbour Wildlife Management Area** *(26% owned by Forever Wild)*
- 2 — **Cahaba River Wildlife Management Area** *(79% lease-owned by Forever Wild)*
- 3 — **Coosa Wildlife Management Area** *(26% owned by Forever Wild)*
- 4 — **Crow Creek Wildlife Management Area** *(8% owned by Forever Wild)*
- 5 — **Freedom Hills Wildlife Management Area** *(75% owned by Forever Wild)*
- 6 — **Lauderdale Wildlife Management Area** *(31% owned by Forever Wild)*
- 7 — **Lowndes Wildlife Management Area** *(15% owned by Forever Wild)*
- 8 — **W.L. Holland & Mobile-Tensaw Delta Wildlife Management Area** *(11% owned by Forever Wild)*
- 9 — **Mulberry Fork Wildlife Management Area** *(100% lease-owned by Forever Wild)*
- 10 — **Perdido River Wildlife Management Area** *(100% owned by Forever Wild and the State Lands Division)*
- 11 — **Riverton Community Hunting Area** *(100% owned by Forever Wild)*
- 12 — **James D. Martin - Skyline Wildlife Management Area** *(39% owned by Forever Wild)*
- 13 — **Upper Delta Wildlife Management Area** *(100% owned by Forever Wild and the State Lands Division)*

To learn more about these Forever Wild tracts and the public hunting opportunities that they offer, go to www.alabamaforeverwild.com



Partnerships

Financial

In the late 1990s, several new federal programs were developed to assist state conservation programs in the effort to protect important and unique habitats by purchasing specific tracts of land. Through these programs, many species of plants and animals have benefited directly from these conservation efforts. In addition to helping restore the well-being of animals such as the bald eagle, which was removed from protection under the Endangered Species Act in 2007, many other species are being helped before they become so rare that they require the protection afforded by the federal law.

Over the last 10 years, grant proposals developed by the ADCNR have been very successful in supporting the acquisitions made by the Forever Wild Land Trust. In this process, the state funds made available through Alabama's Forever Wild Program match federal funds appropriated through the various federal grant programs. The best example is that for every federal dollar we get, we match it with a dollar from Forever Wild.

Forever Wild's competitive grant proposals have successfully secured over \$41.4 million in federal funds from seven programs. These funds effectively increase the purchasing power of Forever Wild, and have resulted in the acquisition of an additional 36,414 acres that would otherwise not have been bought. Most were secured through support from Alabama's congressional delegates. Alabama was positioned to win the funds because Forever Wild was in place.





In summary, these federal grant awards are as follows:

North American Wetlands Conservation Act
Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Four awards totaling \$4 million

National Coastal Wetlands Program
Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Seven awards totaling \$6.6 million

Forest Legacy Program
Managed by the U.S. Forest Service
Seven awards totaling \$11 million

Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program
Managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration
One award, \$4.6 million

Coastal Impact Assistance Program
Managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration and the Mineral Management Services
Six awards totaling \$11.1 million

Endangered Species Act,
Section 6 Habitat Conservation Plan
Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
One award, \$4.2 million

Land and Water Conservation Fund
Managed by the U.S. National Park Service
One award, \$100,000

One of the most significant aspects regarding the federal grant programs and their benefits to Alabama's land based conservation efforts is the stark fact that no other state funding sources exist to replace Alabama's ability to match these federal dollars. Without Alabama's Forever Wild funds, we would be unable to apply for and secure federal support under these numerous federal land acquisition programs.





Government

Many of the Forever Wild projects have been supported by, and directly benefit various government programs. State and local governments have a broad array of planning and management programs directed at outdoor recreational activities. Several of the best examples are:

County Parks and Recreation Boards have many projects that have complemented and directly benefited from Forever Wild projects. These projects have benefited more than 10 counties, and the joint resource management effort proposed in several counties shows real promise for how new projects could achieve a greater good in the future.

Municipal Parks and Recreation Boards have also had many projects that have complemented and directly benefitted from Forever Wild projects. Sixteen projects exist within the boundaries of a city, and joint efforts in management are providing greater opportunities to improve the quality of life associated with more green space and improved recreational opportunities within Alabama's urban areas.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs' (ADECA) Recreation and Trails Program and State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plan are well complemented by Forever Wild acquisitions that support hiking, biking, horseback, canoe, kayak, and watchable wildlife trails utilized by the public. Both ADECA programs are supported by federal grant funds administered by the National Park Service, and assist in state and local government recreational projects.

The Alabama Forestry Commission's Forest Legacy Program receives federal funds through competitive grants from the U.S. Forest Service, which have been matched by Forever Wild funds. No other state funding sources exist to replace these matching dollars. To date, the Alabama Forestry Commission has received \$11 million of federal funds for seven individual projects.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) is charged with monitoring water quality and wetland habitats throughout Alabama. In support of those efforts, ADEM maintains a series of benchmark streams stations by which all other water bodies are compared. Because of their lack of disturbance, many of the highest quality benchmark streams exist on Forever Wild and National Forest lands.

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) has actively developed wetland mitigation banks for over a decade, replacing wetland areas impacted by highway projects. In several instances, ALDOT has positioned these mitigation banks in geographic areas that complement the Forever Wild Program. These examples of coordinated conservation provide the public with a greater overall benefit for the land, habitats, water quality, and the recreational users. It also demonstrates good fiscal responsibility by two government programs. Two great examples are on the Sipsey River (Tuscaloosa Co.) and at Lillian Swamp (Baldwin Co.).

Non-Government Organizations

Non-government Organizations, also known as NGOs, have made a tremendous contribution to Forever Wild's acquisition of land and protection of habitats. Several organizations have played a key role in directly supporting land acquisitions. The best examples of this support are demonstrated through the following actions:

- Four major tracts have been first secured by a partner, and then later re-purchased by Forever Wild. These four projects, located in the Mobile-Tensaw River, the Walls of Jericho, the Perdido River, and the Black Belt Prairie, amount to over 40,710 acres of land acquired through these partnerships.
- NGO partners have provided direct financial assistance toward major projects (e.g., \$1,250,000 in donations toward the Mobile-Tensaw Delta's Clearwater Tract purchase).
- NGO partners have initiated federal funds that have leveraged Forever Wild acquisitions (e.g., earmark from Senator Richard Shelby for the \$4.6 million Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program which assisted in the recent purchase of 9,000 acres along the Perdido River in Baldwin County).
- NGO partners have donated land to serve as match for federal grants securing additional tracts by Forever Wild (e.g., Mobile-Tensaw Delta and Grand Bay Savannah).
- NGO partners acquire lands within significant project areas and function as exceptional neighbors bordering Forever Wild land.
- NGO partners have purchased quality tracts of land that needed to be protected, but didn't necessarily fit the Forever Wild criteria for public use (e.g., Sharp/Bingham Mountain Preserve in Madison County).
- NGO partners have been leaders in identifying new projects areas (e.g., Black Belt Prairies).

Key NGO Partners

- The Alabama Chapter of the Nature Conservancy
- Alabama Wildlife Federation
- Ducks Unlimited
- Weeks Bay Foundation
- Coastal Land Trust
- Land Trust of North Alabama and Huntsville
- Freshwater Land Trust, the Alabama Forest Resources Center
- Alabama Land Trust

Forever Wild has also been good for the long-standing objectives of four national NGO's with state chapters in Alabama. The Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, and the National Wildlife Federation all have strong commitments to the protection of wetland habitats so crucial to many of our nation's most treasured species of wildlife. These wetland areas are also valued for their ability to buffer communities from floods and storms, their capacity to filter pollutants from our rivers and streams and provide clean drinking water. Wetlands also provide nursery habitats for the fish, crabs and shrimp that our coastal fisheries depend on.

Did you know that almost 50 percent of Forever Wild's land acquisitions are wetland habitats?



Billy Pope, Outdoor Alabama



© Beth Maynor Young, 2010



© Beth Maynor Young, 2010

Additional Benefits

Outdoor Education

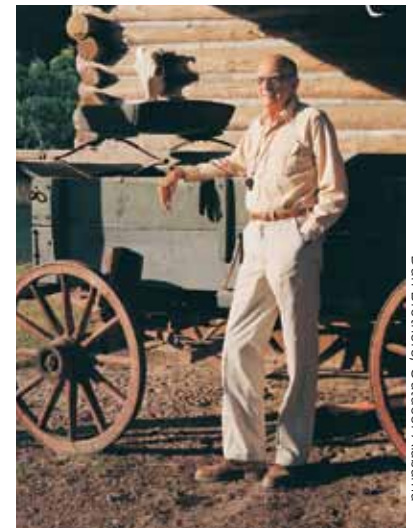
One of the stated purposes of the Forever Wild Program is to support educational opportunities for Alabama's citizens. It was no accident that the legislators designing Constitutional Amendment 543 included three university professors who are appointed by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. The primary intention was that Forever Wild would protect land where school children could experience nature, and lessons regarding the land's ecology could be demonstrated. Forever Wild's tracts of land offer those opportunities, and they have been well used by educators forwarding lessons on conservation and the environment. It wasn't expected that a small idea among Forever Wild's friends could become some of Alabama's greatest outdoor education achievements.

Wehle Nature Centers

In 1994, the Forever Wild Board initiated its first purchase of land. Every land acquisition program aspires to put its best foot forward, but very few people appreciated what a special set of circumstances would follow.

The Wehle Tract was purchased from the late Robert G. Wehle, a businessman from upstate New York. Bob Wehle was a kind and benevolent gentleman who happened to love bird dogs and bobwhite quail. That love brought him to the South, where he purchased 1,500 acres of land near Midway, Alabama. His inherent kindness was first demonstrated when he agreed to donate half the value of his land in Forever Wild's purchase, turning a \$2 million project into a \$1 million acquisition. What an outstanding way for a new land program to begin. However, Mr. Wehle's generosity didn't end there.

Mr. Wehle became close friends with the former Director of State Lands, James H. Griggs. During visits to the Wehle property, Bob Wehle explained his interest in conservation education, and his passion for helping young men and women understand our roots and land heritage. Jim Griggs shared the same passion, and from this friendship sprang the beginnings of the Wehle Land Conservation Center. In this undertaking, Mr. Wehle financially supported the construction and development of two Nature Centers, one adjacent to Forever Wild's Wehle Tract in Bullock County, and the other fronting the Mobile-Tensaw Delta at Blakeley State Park. These partnerships sparked a renewed commitment to outdoor education within the State Lands Division, which has flourished over the last 15 years. Before his untimely death in 2003, Mr. Wehle had the foresight to establish a charitable trust that financially supports the Wehle Land Conservation Center's mission of forwarding land stewardship and natural resource conservation. Since this beginning, the State Lands Division has phased the development and implementation of outdoor education and land stewardship programs at the Bullock County facility. The grand opening for the new conservation center is scheduled for the Fall of 2010.



Robert G. Wehle

Dan Brothers, Outdoor Alabama







© Hunter Nichols, 2010

Five Rivers Delta Resource Center and the Weeks Bay Reserve

The early concepts of outdoor education encouraged by Bob Wehle in Bullock County nurtured a broader consideration of opportunities elsewhere. Within the coastal area of Alabama, much of the State Land Division's fiduciary responsibilities reside within Baldwin and Mobile counties. After the 1999 purchase of 47,000 acres within the Mobile-Tensaw Delta by Forever Wild and ADCNR, there was a renewed interest in program opportunities in the coastal area. In an effort to keep pace with a growing population of 580,000 people within Baldwin and Mobile counties, wetland protection was advancing within the estuarine areas of Weeks Bay and Grand Bay Savannah. Both areas are now components of the federally sponsored National Estuarine Research Reserve system, and have received substantial attention from Forever Wild (see Nature Preserve and Recreation Area acquisitions). To bolster these advances, an executive order by the governor moved the Weeks Bay Reserve and the Alabama Coastal Zone Management Program under the ADCNR's State Lands Division in 2001.

The Weeks Bay Reserve presented an outstanding model for forwarding conservation education and land stewardship. After studying this model for several years, a decision was made to make a similar commitment within the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. The delta is Alabama's largest wetland ecosystem, it greatly influences coastal fisheries and the local economies, and state and federal programs have protected 110,000 acres there. These collective circumstances provided a compelling reason for moving forward.

In 2002 commitments were made, in no small part in recognition of Forever Wild's investment there, to develop a facility that would promote land stewardship, support conservation education, and serve as a recreational gateway to the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. The culmination of these efforts was born in the Spring of 2008 when the Five Rivers Delta Resource Center was dedicated by Conservation Commissioner M. Barnett Lawley and past State Lands Director James H. Griggs. Today, the Five Rivers Delta Resource Center and Weeks Bay Reserve facilities host an annual visitation in excess of 78,000 people. As great an achievement as this has been, it would have never happened without Forever Wild.

Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, the Turkey Creek Nature Preserve and Environmental Center, and others

In a similar fashion to the efforts in Bullock County and coastal Alabama, local organizations within Jefferson County campaigned to create educational facilities highlighting the resources important to the greater Birmingham metropolitan area. These efforts produced the Ruffner Mountain Nature Center near Irondale and the Turkey Creek Preserve near Pinson. Both facilities have developed an outstanding network of supporters, and compliment each other in the focus on different missions and age groups (one upland habitat, the other aquatic, respectively). Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve hosts numerous youth annually within their grounds, while the Turkey Creek Preserve receives the support of the Freshwater Land Trust and Birmingham Southern College in targeting an older audience. Both projects have garnered the support of Forever Wild in purchasing important areas of land crucial to their environmental missions.

Similar efforts are underway near Desoto State Park, where Jacksonville State University is completing the development of the Little River Canyon Field School. The City of Huntsville and Madison County have also made significant commitments to outdoor education at locations like the Goldsmith-Hays Preserves along the Flint River, as well as at Monte Sano State Park. The Land Trust of Huntsville and North Alabama has worked by their side for over two decades to support these quality of life issues in North Alabama. Once again, these projects have garnered the support of Forever Wild in purchasing important areas of land crucial to their environmental missions.



© Beth Maynor Young, 2010







Forever Wild: A Matter of National Security?

In the past few years, Alabama and several other southeastern states have learned that the military bases that we host in our respective communities have been given new missions for the future. This process, governed by the Base Re-Alignment Commission (BRAC), has resulted in several military missions previously maintained in other areas of the country to be designated for “re-alignment” to other bases. Alabama, Georgia, Florida and North Carolina have all been designated as states hosting military bases that will receive new or additional missions. Within Alabama, this has affected Redstone Arsenal, Fort Benning, Fort McClellan and Fort Rucker.

What could this possibly have to do with Forever Wild? Military bases that were once in rural “the middle of nowhere” are now not so far away. These military bases and the missions they support need open undeveloped space — space to plan, space to train and space to grow. As an example, helicopters and other aircraft running training missions from Fort Rucker and Eglin Air Base need “dark space” where they can practice night-time operations that utilize special technologies. This can only be done in areas with limited human development. These areas still exist, but for how long? Coastal areas, those defined as being within 50 miles of our nation’s shorelines, are the most populated and rapidly growing areas of our country. Coastal Alabama and our Wiregrass region are expected to experience dramatic future growth.

How can these areas be protected? You guessed it, Forever Wild. By partnering with the Department of Defense and the programs they have to address these issues (visit Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability, also known as SERPPAS, www.serppas.org/ or see the Army Compatible Use Buffer program, also known as ACUB <http://aec.army.mil/usaec/acub/acubse.pdf>), Forever Wild could own and manage many of these remaining forestlands in a manner that benefits everyone. This presents the proverbial “win-win” situation.

We can only hope that after 2012, we have a Forever Wild Program with funding to support such an important issue of state, regional and national significance.

Did you know that Forever Wild lands have already supported the BRAC process?

During the past two years, 35 imperiled gopher tortoises have been relocated from previously inactive artillery ranges at Fort Benning to the Wehle Tract in Bullock County. This relocation effort makes room on the base for the Army’s expanding artillery training program there, while bolstering restoration efforts for longleaf pine communities in the sand hills of lower Alabama.

Conclusion

Within Alabama's conservation community, much has been accomplished in the last four decades. During the last twenty years, the Forever Wild Land Trust has played a significant role in supporting many of the greatest conservation achievements that we have experienced in this time.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment is that Forever Wild has demonstrated that broad interests can work together to protect Alabama's unique natural heritage while supporting the state's diverse economy. Instead of an endless stream of environmental problems and conservation failures, we have seen the opposite. Seventeen years of successful conservation, and the proof that Alabama's government can provide what its citizens' want most — sound fiscal policy and honoring the commitments made to our people.

As we consider the future for conserving Alabama's natural heritage and supporting outdoor recreational pursuits, we must ask ourselves a simple question: "Have we completed what we need to achieve, or is there more work to be done?" If the answer is yes, there is more to achieve, then we must close by asking: "Will we need Forever Wild to be available to make our next efforts possible?" We hope your answer will once again be yes, and just as Alabamians did in 1992, the people resolve through the legislative process to protect the Forever Wild Land Trust and continue funding for another 20 years.







Frequently Asked Questions

Over the last decade, as the Forever Wild Board of Trustees has strategically worked to acquire and protect Alabama's unique lands, we have encountered several misconceptions about the Forever Wild Program. To help dispel some of these misunderstandings, we offer the following examples:

MYTH: Forever Wild can “take” private land from owners who don’t want to sell.

FACT: *Constitutional Amendment 543 specifically states the program only purchases land from willing sellers. Forever Wild does not have any condemnation powers.*

MYTH: Forever Wild can pay any price a seller demands for their land.

FACT: *Constitutional Amendment 543 specifically states the program must appraise the prospective land — twice. The Forever Wild Board has never paid more than appraised value.*

MYTH: When Forever Wild purchases land, it becomes “locked up” and cannot be used by the citizens of Alabama.

FACT: *Constitutional Amendment 543 specifically states that the Forever Wild lands are to be utilized for multiple purposes. The only portion of Forever Wild property that prohibits public use is a small cave that contains a unique bat population protected under the Endangered Species Act.*

MYTH: Forever Wild land hurts local communities by taking land off the tax rolls.

FACT: *Forever Wild is a state government program, and like other state agency land, Forever Wild pays no ad valorem taxes to local governments. However, it is commonly understood that the recreational opportunities provided on these lands attract visitors who replace these losses through income from sales taxes in these same communities. This process is believed to more than replace any funds associated with a change in the land's tax status.*

MYTH: Forever Wild manages its land like the federal government's wilderness areas, and never cuts any timber and neglects the management of the habitats.

FACT: *Most Forever Wild land has forested habitats. Many Forever Wild tracts have timber reservations whereby the previous owner retained ownership of*

pine plantations for the remainder of their rotation. In other instances where Forever Wild does own the land and timber, the timber is selectively harvested to improve wildlife habitats. These efforts are driven by habitat goals, not financial goals. Any money derived through the sale of Forever Wild timber goes to the state's General Fund, not the Forever Wild Fund.

MYTH: Forever Wild doesn't allow for public hunting.

FACT: *In the spirit of the program's intentions for multiple-use, 96 percent of Forever Wild land is open to some form of public hunting as a recreational activity. Exceptions are mostly in State Parks.*

MYTH: It costs a lot of money to recreate on Forever Wild land.

FACT: *With the exception of licenses associated with hunting and the Wildlife Management Area system, use of Forever Wild land is free to the public.*

MYTH: Alabama already has too much public land.

FACT: *Within the Southeastern United States, the average amount of public conservation land is 12.5 percent. Before the Forever Wild program began in 1992, 3.89 percent of Alabama was publicly owned land (mostly federal lands). Today, 4.38 percent is publicly owned. We all applaud the achievements of Forever Wild, but the acquisitions have amounted to just over 0.5 percent increase in public land, and we remain 8 percent below the SE regional average.*

MYTH: Forever Wild buys family farms, reducing the production of food.

FACT: *Forever Wild has never purchased a family farm. It is also notable that the wild game present on Forever Wild land is a healthy and economical form of food for those who wish to consider this opportunity.*

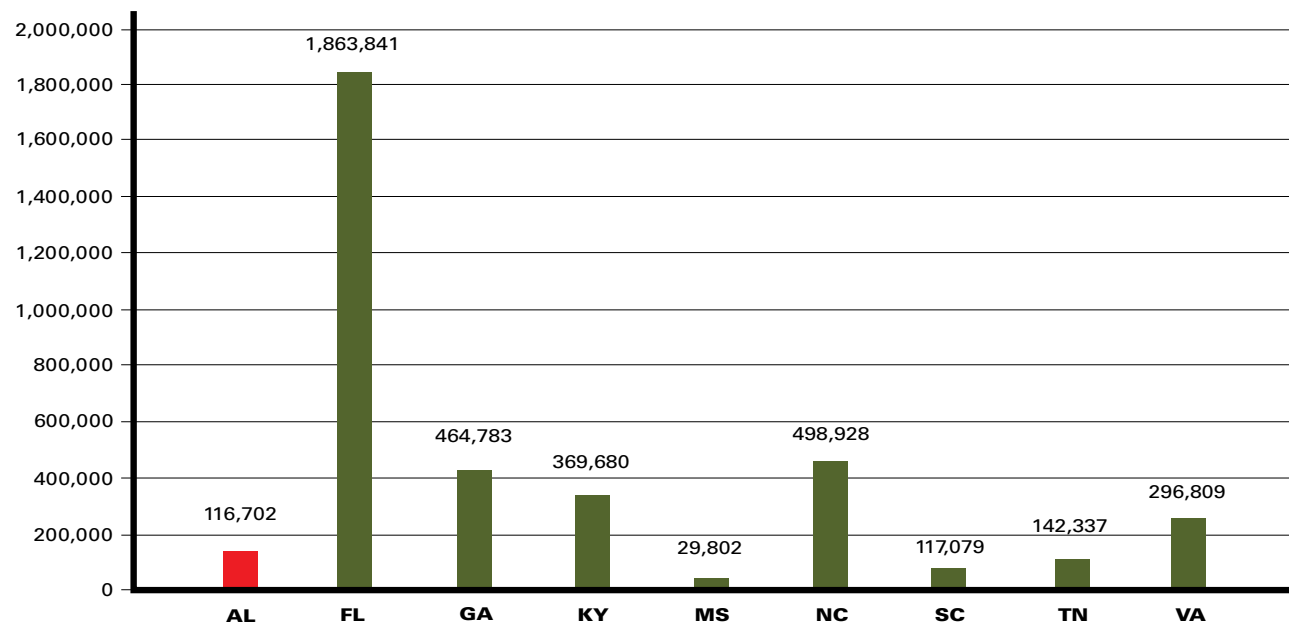
Some other interesting facts about the benefits of Alabama's Forever Wild Program

- **Did you know** that 98.67 percent of Alabama's 5,006,840 residents live within 50 miles of a Forever Wild property? It's true, and when we go beyond Alabama's borders, 14,470,641 people live within 50 miles of Forever Wild land.
- **Did you know** that Forever Wild's acquisitions are credited as assets of the Alabama Trust Fund? These same asset values improve Alabama's bond rating, and once again contribute to the state's healthy economy. If these same public funds were spent on conservation initiatives for private land, what would Alabama have to show for it?
- **Did you know** that among nine southern states with land acquisition efforts, Alabama ranked 8th in a review of acres of public land acquired and protected during the recent period from 1998 to 2005 (Figure 1).
- **Did you know** that Alabama's largest economic business is tourism? Many visitors to Alabama seek out our state's beautiful public lands and parks. As an example, 16 percent of Alabama's licensed hunters are from out of state. The majority of these licensed hunters from out of state come from Georgia and Florida.
- **Did you know** that numerous recent surveys among regional and national outdoor organizations indicates that lack of access and loss of public lands is the greatest concern among public land users? This concern is only heightened when we consider the growth of our state's population, and the fact that you can't grow more land!
- **Did you know** that four Forever Wild projects have protected and buffered significant historical archeological sites? Blakeley Historic Park, Fort Toulouse, Old Cahawba, and the Bottle Creek Indian Mounds have all benefited from Forever Wild purchases. Numerous lesser known sites have also been protected on Forever Wild land. More sites are presently being considered.
- **Did you know** that Forever Wild land protects our coastal estuaries in Baldwin and Mobile counties? These wetland habitats serve as nursery areas for Alabama's crabs, shrimp, and marine fishes that are crucial to Alabama's coastal fisheries and their local economies.
- **Did you know** that Forever Wild lands support many non-game species of wildlife and native plants? Over 4,000 species of native plants and animals use habitats on Forever Wild land, and this rich diversity of life makes Alabama a global leader in the conservation of our nation's natural heritage.
- **Did you know** that among nine southern states with land acquisition efforts, Alabama ranked 7th in a review of expenditures from 1998 to 2005 for land purchasing (Figure 2).

Conservation Acres Acquired by State and Federal Programs in the Southeast 1998-2005

(Figure 1)

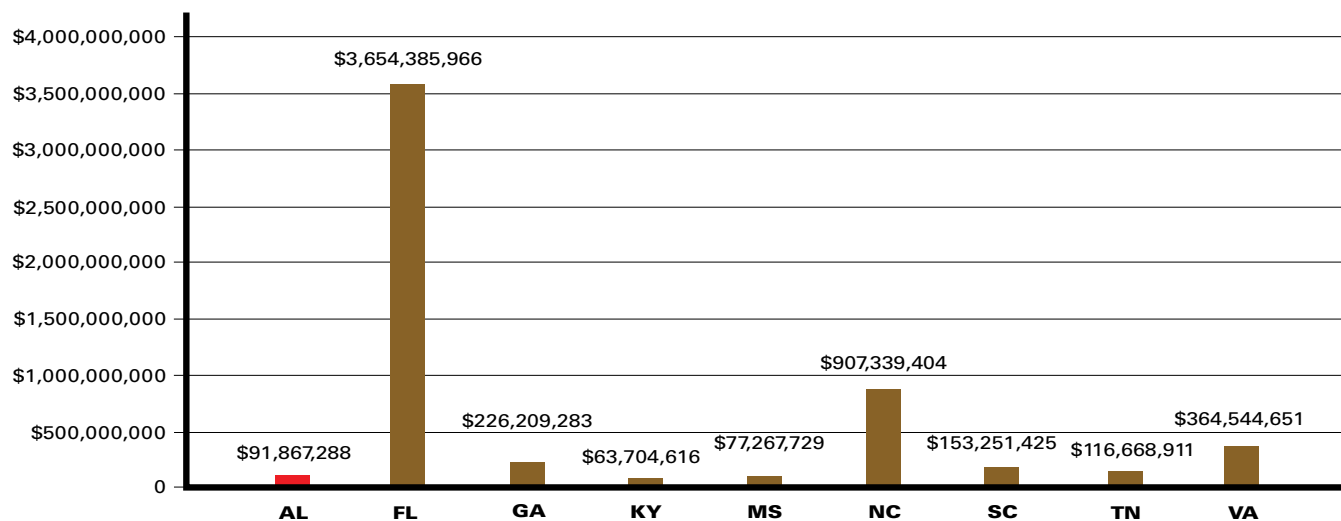
Total acreage of conservation lands acquired by state and federal programs from 1998-2005. Program directives vary by state (e.g. preservation of natural lands and wetlands, creation of parklands, trails, greenways, fee simple purchase vs. conservation easement, etc.). Data was obtained from the Trust for Public Land's Conservation Almanac, available online at www.conservationalmanac.org.



Conservation Land Acquisition Costs in Southeastern States 1998-2005

(Figure 2)

Total cost of conservation lands acquired by state and federal programs from 1998-2005. Program directives vary by state (e.g. preservation of natural lands and wetlands, creation of parklands, trails, greenways, fee simple purchase vs. conservation easement, etc.). Data was obtained from the Trust for Public Land's Conservation Almanac, available online at www.conservationalmanac.org.





Forever Wild Land Trust
64 N. Union St. Suite 464
Montgomery, AL 36130

334-242-3484

www.alabamaforeverwild.com

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MONTGOMERY AL
PERMIT NO 109

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, gender, national origin or disability in its hiring or employment practices nor in admission to, or operation of its programs, services or activities.